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CIA Watchdog Unit

Move Pleases McCarthy

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WASHINGTON — Sen. Eugene McCarthy, who sparked one of Washington's most celebrated squabbles last year over the issue of closer Senate supervision of the CIA, conceded Monday that half a loaf is better than none.

The Minnesota senior Democrat said expansion of a Senate CIA watchdog committee, announced over the weekend, provided "the substance of what we were asking for."

However, McCarthy, chief sponsor of an unsuccessful proposal in the 89th Congress to keep a tighter rein on the giant spy agency, added that it would be "more desirable" if the new arrangement were formalized by the Senate.

McCarthy's comments came after CIA Director Richard Helms met Monday in a secret session with the watchdog subcommittee, which had been enlarged by the addition of Foreign Relations Committee chairman William Fulbright, D-Ark., and Bourke Hickenlooper, R-Iowa. The latter two were invited to represent the Foreign Relations Committee by Richard Russell, D-Ga., who heads the watchdog group.

"The question remains," McCarthy said, "of whether or not this can be given or taken away. It is more desirable that formal action be taken by the Senate to establish the right of the Foreign Relations Committee to information about the operations of the CIA."

McCarthy has been a longtime critic of CIA operations and their effect on U.S. foreign policy. Last year, he was chief sponsor of a proposal to formalize the CIA watchdog committee, which is a loose arrangement of nine members of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations committees.

He also proposed adding to the Foreign Relations Committee, on which he sits, but the proposal was killed after a rare

four-hour Senate debate behind closed doors.

In that debate, McCarthy, Fulbright and other members contended that the CIA operations often adversely affected or even created U.S. foreign policy. Russell called the move an attempt to "muscle in" on the watchdog group's jurisdiction.

Present at Monday's session, in addition to Russell, Fulbright and Hickenlooper, were Sens. John Stennis, D-Miss., Stuart Symington, D-Mo., Carl Hayden, D-Ariz., Margaret Chase Smith, R-Maine, Milton Young, R-N.D., and Karl Mundt, R-S.D. Mundt is a newcomer to the group, replacing former Sen. Leverett Saltonstall, R-Mass., who retired.

Russell told newsmen after Monday's meeting that the new arrangement will be permanent and added, "it was very successful this afternoon." Fulbright said it is "too soon to say" whether the new arrangement will work out.